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SUBJECT: Lebanon: Media Reaction - March 4, 2009

Atmospherics:

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Most media outlets front-paged that Acting Assistant Secretary Jeffrey Feltman and National Security Council Senior Director Daniel Shapiro will be visiting Lebanon soon. The Central News Agency reported that the visit may take place "within the coming few hours." Several media outlets noted that the visit is meant to reaffirm continued U.S. support for Lebanon, its institutions and its Army. One newspaper characterized Secretary Clinton's decision to "send" Acting A/S Feltman to Lebanon as an indication of the U.S.' "heightened interest in Lebanon." A few media outlets noted that Acting A/S Feltman is visiting Beirut "before" Damascus.

Selected Headlines

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"A More Adamant American 'Syria Accountability' Project for Its Constant Interference in Lebanon and Support for Terrorist Organization" Pro-Hariri Al-Mustaqbal

"Hillary Clinton To Send Feltman to Damascus" Independent Al-Anwar

"Clinton Sends Feltman to Beirut and Damascus and Arab and International Welcome of the Tribunal" Pro-Sunni Al-Liwa'

"Washington Elevates the Degree of Its Interest in Lebanon So It Sends Feltman to Beirut En Route to Damascus" Independent Al-Bayraq

"U.S. Outreach towards Damascus is Being Carried Out via Beirut" French-language, Beirut-based L'Orient - Le Jour

Block Quotes:

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"Clinton, Instead of Promising Us Palestine, Create an Israeli State," an unsigned editorial in English-language, Beirut-based The Daily Star (3/4):

"U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's pledge to 'vigorously' pursue a peace process that will lead to the creation of a Palestinian state is not likely to generate huge excitement among Arabs in the Middle East. Even though we would like to believe in the change promised by President Obama's administration, many of us have grown disillusioned with a lengthy peace process that has produced few tangible results. ...Instead of building our hopes again, Clinton should focus on an easier achievement: create an Israeli state. Yes, the United States formally recognized Israel just 11 minutes after Zionists declared its creation on Palestinian land in 1948, and most other nations have since followed suit, but the Jewish state remains a nebulous entity because its exact borders have not yet been drawn. ...We have long heard promises that a Palestinian state is within reach. ...Clinton would do well to avoid repeating the mistakes of Bush and his predecessors by raising - and then crushing - the hopes of yet another generation of Arabs. Instead she should work with U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon to

nail down the exact borders of the state of Israel. Then at least Israel's egregious acts of expansion would be defined as taking place outside the Jewish state's borders. Maybe then the world would finally put an end to this crime."

Grant